



KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CENTER FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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Certification of State Register Listing

The Register of Historic Kansas Places includes all Kansas properties nominated to the National Register as well as lower threshold properties which are listed on the state register only.

Property Name: Lackman-Thompson Farm

Address: 11180 Lackman Road, Lenexa, Kansas 66219

Legal: NE 1/4, SE 1/4, NE 1/4, NE 1/4 and SE 1/4, NE 1/4, NE 1/4,
NE 1/4, S. 17, T. 13, R. 24, Olathe Township, Johnson
County, Kansas

County: Johnson

Owner: Betty Keim, President
Johnson County Community College Foundation
12345 College Boulevard
Overland Park, Kansas 66210

Hugh Zimmer
Zimmer Construction
1220 Washington Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64105

National Register eligible _____

State Register eligible X

This property was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review for the Register of Historic Kansas Places on May 2, 1992.

I hereby certify that this property is listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

Ramon Power
State Historic Preservation Officer

5/6/92
Date

LACKMAN THOMPSON HOUSE AND THOMPSON BARN

Address: 11180 Lackman Road

Legal Description: In NE4, NE4, NE4, S17, T13, R24. The house is on approximately two acres owned by the Johnson County Community College. The barn is on a large tract of land owned by Zimmer Development.

Criterion

A. The Lackman Thompson House can be nominated because of William Lackman's connection with the interurban electric railway. Interurbans were an important part of local and national history at this time. William Strang (1857-1921) finished constructing and ran the interurban line Lackman began from 1906-1939.

B. William Lackman's part in beginning to develop a Kansas City-Olathe electric line makes him an important figure in the local history of a national development.

C. Since William Lackman brought in European artisans to work on the house, it was an unusual and outstanding example of a farm residence in the county. The barn constructed on the property in 1932-1933 is also a unique example of barn architecture.

Description

The Lackman Thompson House is an example of a composite of the Second Empire and Queen Anne architectural styles. The straight mansard roof with dormer windows is in the Second Empire style. The cornice of the house with its paired decorative undereave brackets and scalloped cornice detail, as well as the unadorned exterior walls, are also typical of the style.

"The [Second Empire] style is characterized principally by its distinctive roof. . . . Dormers and dormer windows appear in a great variety of styles. Beneath the distinctive roof line, Second Empire houses have details that are similar to those of the closely related Italianate style. Many show Italianate brackets at the cornice line; . . . Second Empire houses normally have less eave overhang than do Italianate examples" (McAlester 242). The roof also has cast iron roof cresting. "The boxy roof line was considered particularly functional because it permitted a full upper story of usable attic space" (McAlester 242). Queen Anne features of the house include the spindlework porch detailing. "About 50 percent of Queen Anne houses have delicate turned porch supports and spindlework ornamentation. . ." (McAlester 264). The form of the house also has Queen Anne features including porches on the east and south elevations and two tower-like bays at the northeast and southeast corners of the house.

On the first floor, the house has a kitchen which has been remodelled with a pantry area to the north. There are three other rooms on this floor. The two on the north have fairly elaborately

painted moldings around the ceiling. There are fireplaces in two of the rooms on the first floor. Most of the rooms in the house have plaster medallions in the center of the ceilings. Some have plaster decorative elements on the walls as well. Hugh Thompson has stated in several interviews that Lackman brought in European craftsmen, Italian artisans for the plaster work and German woodworkers for the interior woodwork and furniture (HT Interview, 1979; DeAngelo; Ellison). Most of the woodwork is white pine; however, there is a walnut staircase leading to the second floor. Some of the doors on the first floor still retain their original painted graining.

On the second floor there are four rooms as well as a modern bathroom. There is also a rear staircase from the kitchen to the second floor, as well as one leading to a large third floor attic.

The house has a two-foot rock wall foundation, and Lackman incorporated a wine cellar with a scalloped brick ceiling in the basement.

A primary change to the house is the asbestos siding which Charles Thompson believes was added around 1938. He believes the house originally was clapboard (CT Interview, 1992). On the interior, the kitchen and the second-floor bathroom have been modernized. It also appears, looking at a photograph of the house dated December, 1899, that the porches were screened in at a later date. Stained glass windows which were in the entryway of the house have been removed and replaced with clear glass. The house is structurally sound; however, there does appear to be some water damage in the attic and second floor rooms.

There has been interest in the house since it was constructed. In 1891, John Roe built a similar house in what is now Roeland Park after seeing Lackman's home. Also, within the past few years, Whitaker Period Homes measured the exterior of the Lackman House and built a home with a replica of the front part of the house at 140th Street and Switzer Road.

The Thompson Barn was built in 1932-1933. It is 82 feet wide and 265 feet long. The red brick barn has a vaulted roof of crimped metal which is bolted on to the structure. The barn is supported by steel beams that can be adjusted as the barn settles. The interior of the barn is oak, and there is a wooden grain chute that leads to the lower level. At one point there was an addition running on the south side of the barn for about eighty feet that is no longer there. The height of the roofline of this addition is still visible on the south elevation.

The barn seems to be in the same location as Lackman's original barn which burned down. In one interview, Hugh Thompson states that they "replaced most of it" (HT Interview, 1979) which indicates that some of the foundation may be from Lackman's original barn.

The plans for the construction of the barn were from The Loudon Machinery Company, Dept. of Agricultural Engineering, No. G1040. These plans are for "Details and Cross Section, Arched Roof Barn" and include details for rafter construction on mow floor, bolting detail for girders, a cross section of the barn, and elevation of the side framing, and the method of laying out trussed rafter.

Charles Thompson, Hugh Thompson's son, mentioned that there was also a smaller house on the property west of the large house that was town down. Currently, in addition to the house and the barn, there is an outbuilding, outhouse, and chicken house which have been moved to cement slabs. A two-car brick garage which was probably built in the 1940s, and a stone smokehouse. I cannot locate any concrete evidence on the smokehouse and people have commented to me everything from it pre-dating the house to the Thompsons constructing it.

Statement of Significance

The Lackman Thompson House was built in 1886-1887 by William Lackman. Lackman began purchasing land in the NE4 of Section 17, Township 13, Range 24, in 1885 from Frank V. Ostrander (J.C. Deed Book 49, Page 321) and Joseph F. and Sarah C. Riffey (J.C. Deed Book 49, Page 423). The land purchased from the Riffeys includes the land on which the house was built.

William Lackman and his wife Margaretha (or Margaretta) were both born in Germany and immigrated to the United States. They may have been residents in Missouri before they moved to Johnson County, Kansas (Kansas State Census, 1895 and 1905). Little is known about them before they moved to the county or after they left.

In 1886 and 1887, the Mt. Zion section of the Olathe Mirror noted Lackman's progress on the house and on the barn which he built at the same time:

"Mr. Lockman [sic] is putting in the foundations for a very nice house and barn." Nov. 16, 1886

"Mr. Lackemen's [sic] house and barn will be one of the finest in the county when they are finished." Nov. 30, 1886

"W.M. Lackman has the finest dwelling house and nicest barn in this county any where, we are glad that some of our citizens have got some taste about them." Feb. 24, 1887

During the period the house was built, Lackman's taxes also soared from \$291 in 1886 to \$3,895 in 1887 (OM July 1, 1886, and June 30, 1887).

William Lackman appears in the agricultural census of the Kansas State Census (1895 and 1905). It appears that he was primarily a farmer, but also started an interurban railway between Kansas City and Olathe (the Kansas City and Olathe Electric Railway Company)

with David B. Johnson (LWT, Oct. 10, 1901). Lackman and Johnson raised money for this venture, selling stock in denominations as low as \$100. They surveyed the area, purchased the right of way, and grading was in progress by Spring of 1904 (Chandler, 155).

According to interviews with Hugh Thompson, Lackman lost \$40,000 when two promoters ran off with the company bankroll (HT Interview, 1979). At that time, Lackman put his farm up for sale to pay off his debts. In 1906, Lackman sold the right of way to the Missouri and Kansas Interurban Railway Company "to be used for a railroad operated by electricity or any other native power, except steam" (JC Deed, 1906). William Strang, the buyer of this railway, ran a very successful interurban between Kansas City and Olathe from 1906 through 1939 that was commonly known as the Strang Line.

This interurban line paralleled the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad that ran along Lackman's farm. By 1902, there was a Lackman Station in the NW4, NW4, NW4, S16, T13, R24 which served the railroad and later the Strang Line as well. At some point, the north-south road that runs between sections 16 and 17 was named Lackman Road.

In 1908, Frank Thompson, a native Kansan who was a mule and horse dealer in Kansas City, bought the Lackman farm (JC Deed Book, 1908) and moved from Armourdale, Missouri, with his wife Carrie and his son Hugh who was eleven. Thompson, looking for higher ground after the floods of 1903, 1904, and 1908, heard that the Lackman farm was for sale from one of his buyers who lived in Olathe. Mr. Thompson and Hugh took the train to Lackman Station to view the farm, and Thompson bought it shortly thereafter. The \$32,000 purchase price included the land, house, barn, livestock, equipment, and the furniture in the house which had been crafted by the European craftsmen who did the interior woodwork. The walnut for the furniture and woodwork originally came from the farm.

Mr. Thompson had an office and barn in Kansas City and took the #104 train from Lackman Station to the old Union Station. He kept stock at his Kansas City barn as well as his farm. He sold black riding horses to the New York Police, draft horses to the Kansas City Ice Company, and horses to the Western Transfer Company. A Lenexa mail carrier also bought two teams of horses for his mail route. He also sold mules to buyers in the South for work in the cotton fields.

During the first World War, Thompson branded 1,000 horses for the U.S. Calvary. These horses went to Newport News, Virginia, and then by boat to France (HT Interview, 1979). In the 1921 Kansas Farmer and Mail & Breeze Directory, Thompson's farm is called the "Maple Rock Stock Farm" (p. 342).

The Thompson farm was fairly efficient and had a spring for water, as well as its own electric light plant. In August of 1932, when the farm electricity was switched over the Kansas City Power and Light, the Lackman's original barn burned down due to an error in wiring. Shortly after, Thompson replaced the barn with a red brick one. Brick was chosen because it was easy to keep up, and the Thompsons hauled brick from uptown Grand Avenue in Kansas City

on a one-ton Ford truck. The cost of the brick was five dollars per thousand. The Thompsons hired stonemasons, hod carriers, and carpenters to construct the barn (HT Interview, 1979). There is also a story about Hugh Thompson picking up a hitchhiker named Ayres who was an architect on the lam who the Thompsons hired to work on the barn (HS Interview, 1992).

The wooden grain chute which goes from the main floor of the barn to a lower floor was taken from Bill Graham's mill which was about half a mile away. The large stones bordering the driveway were also taken from the mill.

Hugh Thompson moved from the farm and married his wife Mary in 1922, but moved back to take over the operation in 1936 when his father died. Hugh and Mary had six children, and their sons continued to run the farm after Thompson retired. Later, Thompson sold all but the two acres the house was on to developers. He also willed the house to the Johnson County Community College upon his death.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RE. LACKMAN-THOMPSON FARM

The land which William Lackman began purchasing in 1885 in the NE4 of Section 17, Township 13, Range 24, was in a primarily agricultural area. The road which followed the old Santa Fe Trail and the right of way for the Kansas City, Fort Scott, and Memphis (St. Louis & San Francisco) Railroad passed through his property. This road and railroad provided easy access for both freight and travelers between Lackman's property and the two largest nearby cities, Kansas City and the thriving county seat in Olathe. The site was attractive for a farm because of this direct connection to markets in both cities. William Lackman may also have considered constructing an interurban rail system before he moved to this land. Since his later plan was to place it parallel to the railroad and the road, this location would have been right along the route.

William Lackman did make trips to Kansas City from his farm. In 1887, both he and his wife attended a wedding in Kansas City. (OM 9/8/87) On several occasions the Olathe Mirror notes that William Lackman made "flying trips" to Kansas City on the weekends. These trips were often made with Herman Busch, a neighbor to the northwest. (egs. OM 3/3/87, 10/6/87)

By 1902, Lackman Station appears on the Oxford Township atlas map. This station appears to have served both the railroad line and later William Strang's interurban line. The nearby community may also have been called "Lackman." In an October, 1887, issue of the Olathe Mirror the community usually called Mt. Zion (after School District #71 to the north) and later called Pleasant View (after School District #96 to the south), was referred to as "Lackman." On a 1912 county map, the community of Lackman is just north of the community of Pleasant View. In his 1915 history of Johnson County, Ed Blair in his chapter on "Other Towns and Villages" notes that "Lackman, three miles north of Olathe, is a station on the Frisco." [180] "Lackman" also appears on the 1922 county atlas map. The community of Lackman appears to consist of the farms surrounding the station. Lackman never had a post office; there are no records of any businesses there either.

Near the end of the nineteenth century and through the 1920s, several German and Belgian farmers settled in the Lenexa area. Lackman, of German descent, had a thriving farm by 1895 when the Kansas Agricultural Census documents his corn and wheat crops (corn was a common crop in Johnson County), livestock, and 125-tree apple orchard. Lackman was still farming in 1905, however, his holdings had decreased somewhat by that time (probably due to his increasing debts.)

Although there is very little information on William Lackman, he appears to have had contact with some of his neighbors. Lackman and his wife appear in a group studio photograph c. 1897-98 with Dick Busch and his wife, Herman Busch and his wife (the neighbor who he went to K.C. with), Will Pundt and his wife Katy (neighbors to the north), and Herman Vogue and his wife. The occasion for the photograph is unknown.

When Frank Thompson bought the farm in 1908, he bought all of Lackman's livestock, land, and equipment. By the time he purchased the farm, the Strang interurban line was in place, providing additional transportation to Kansas City and Olathe. Hugh Speer published a book recollecting the history of the community in which he grew up. He recalls that the neighbors (including the Thompsons) respected one another and would help each other out. He also remembers that a number of the neighbors died in the flu epidemic of 1918. Although neighbors like the Speers would help Frank Thompson if he needed it, the Thompson family isolated themselves from their local community. Frank Thompson worked in Kansas City and did some trading in Olathe.

Between the time Frank Thompson moved to the area in 1908 and the 1920s, what were large farms were divided into smaller ones. Truck farming and dairying for Kansas City became popular. Hugh Speer recalls that milk cans from dairies would go in to Kansas City by rail in the morning and the empty cans would be tossed off the train along the route. Farmers would pick up their empty milk cans from the side of the tracks in the evening.

Easy transportation to Kansas City was important to Thompson's stockraising business--both for his transportation to work and for shipping livestock. The Thompson Farm was successful because they remained flexible. During the first World War they supplied the Cavalry with horses. Between the 1915 census and the 1925 census, Thompson followed county trends of an increase in both poultry and hogs. During this time there was an increased demand for these products in Kansas City. Thompson also kept up with mechanization. By 1925 he owned a tractor. [1925 Kansas State Census] During the depression, when several Johnson Countians lost their farms, Hugh Thompson bought and sold hay and oats to feed race horses. (Interview, HT) After Hugh Thompson took over the farm, he added dairying and a serum plant to the farm's production.

When Hugh Thompson moved to the farm, he was eleven years old. When he began school in this area, he rode horses which his father was fattening for sale. There was a pony barn at the school, so other students probably rode to school as well. Later, he rode the Strang Line in to Olathe for high school. (Interview, HT)

During the years Hugh Thompson ran the farm (1936-1980s), Johnson County went through steady population increases. Because of changing transportation patterns, the Strang Line closed in 1939. After World War II, Johnson County experienced a phenomenal population increase. Between 1945 and 1950, the county's population grew from 35,000 to 62,783. Real estate development began pushing south and west. Lenexa, which was a small town to the north of the Lackman-Thompson Farm, began to grow steadily. Lenexa began annexing land and at this time, the Lackman-Thompson Farm is annexed at the southernmost point of Lenexa. During the last decade, Lenexa has been one of the state's five fastest-growing communities and has attracted many businesses.

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